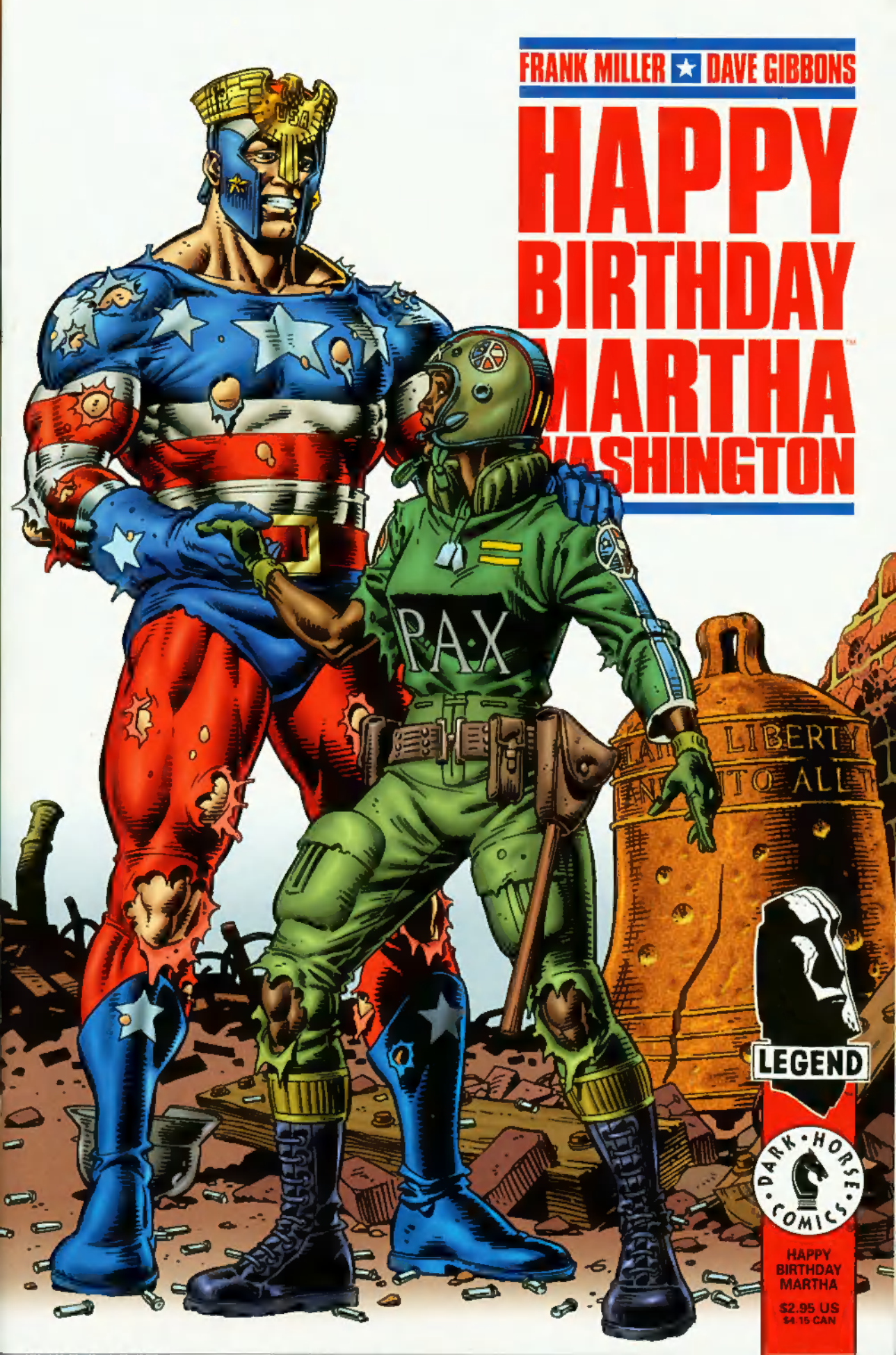
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARTHA WASHINGTON
PAX
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DARK HORSE COMICS
HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARTHA
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"STATE OF THE ART" & "WAR DIARY"

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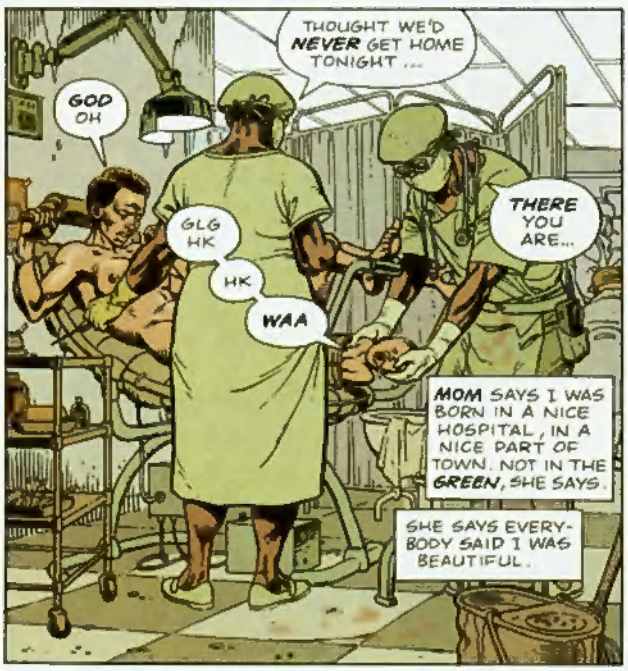
FRANK MILLER ★ DAVE GIBBONS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARTHA WASHINGTON

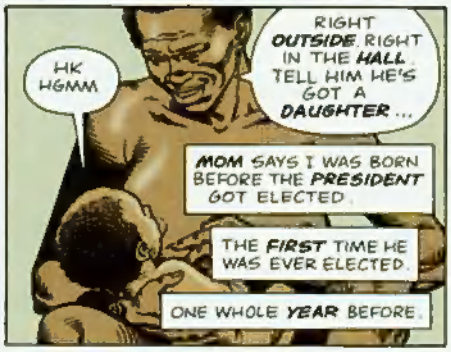
★★ MARCH 11, 1995 ★★

1995

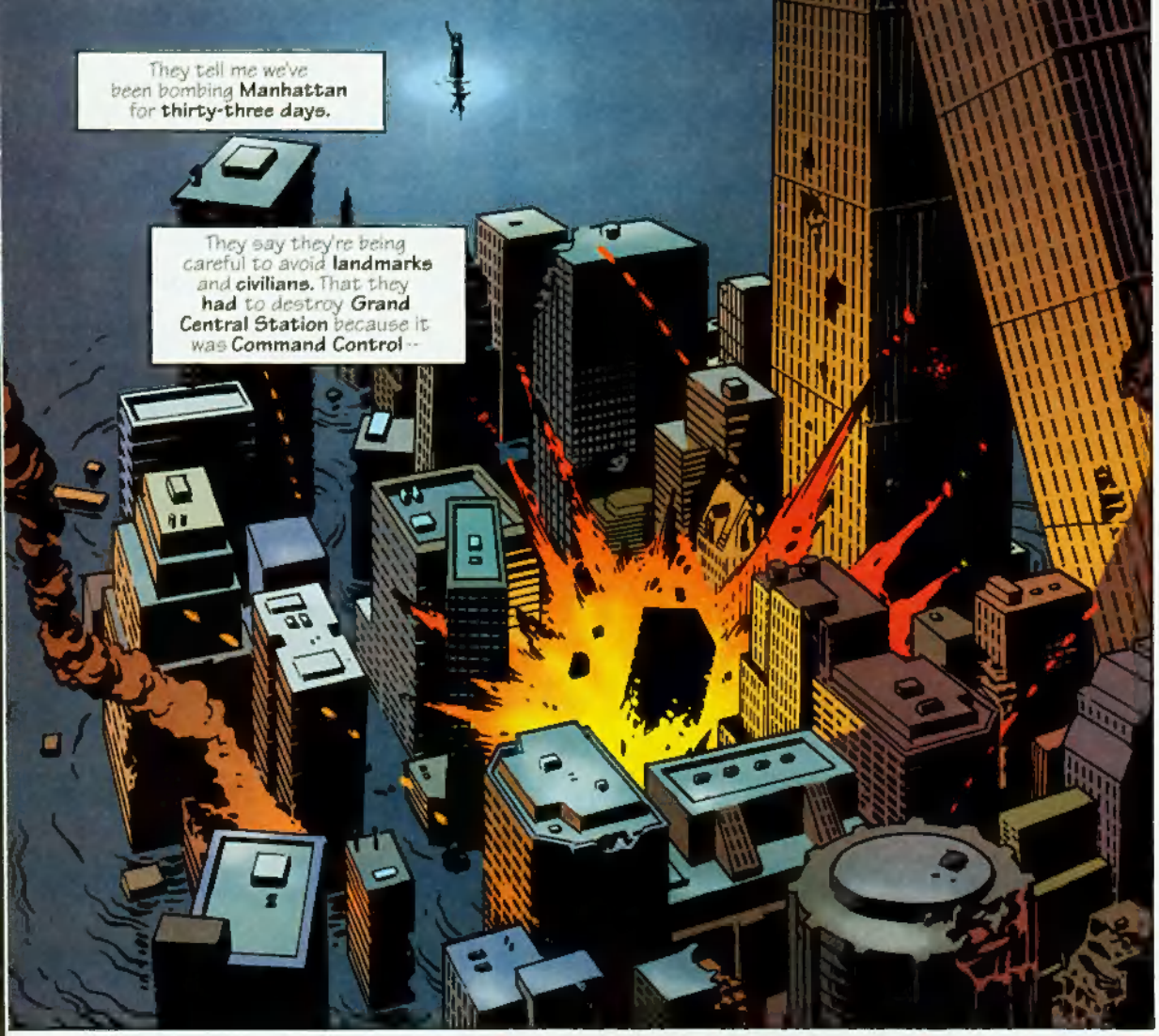
IT WAS MARCH 11. SAME DAY THE INTELLIGENCE BANKS WERE CENTRALIZED.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, BUT IT'S THE ONLY THING SPECIAL ABOUT MY BIRTHDAY.
CUT ME SONFBITCH KILL HIM
INFIRMAR


GOD OH
THOUGHT WE'D NEVER GET HOME TONIGHT ...
GLG HK
HK
WAA
THERE YOU ARE...
MOM SAYS I WAS BORN IN A NICE HOSPITAL, IN A NICE PART OF TOWN. NOT IN THE GREEN, SHE SAYS.
SHE SAYS EVERYBODY SAID I WAS BEAUTIFUL.

MY HUSBAND JOHN -- HE'S OUT IN THE HALL.
GOT MY OWN LIFE...
WAAA
HK
WAA
RIGHT. BE RIGHT THERE.


HK HGMM
RIGHT OUTSIDE. RIGHT IN THE HALL. TELL HIM HE'S GOT A DAUGHTER ...
MOM SAYS I WAS BORN BEFORE THE PRESIDENT GOT ELECTED.
THE FIRST TIME HE WAS EVER ELECTED.
ONE WHOLE YEAR BEFORE.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE


They tell me we've been bombing Manhattan for thirty-three days.
They say they're being careful to avoid landmarks and civilians. That they had to destroy Grand Central Station because it was Command Control --

-- just like they say we had to take out the Brooklyn Bridge to isolate the Manhattan military.
They say all kinds of things.
My favorite is the one about how no Peace Force officer would ever be ordered to assassinate anybody.

BRAKABRAKABRAKABRAKABRAKAB

PFOOM

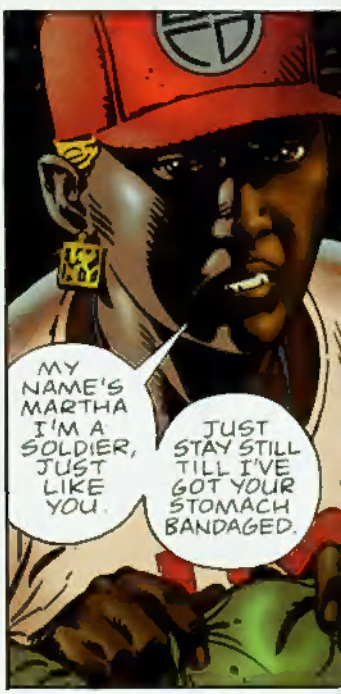
KEKK

POOM
POOM
POOM

PAK

HUNFF?
MY EYES-- JESUS-- I CAN'T SEE...

STEADY. IT'S BLOOD. IT'S IN YOUR EYES.
WHAT HAPPENED--? WHO ARE YOU...?

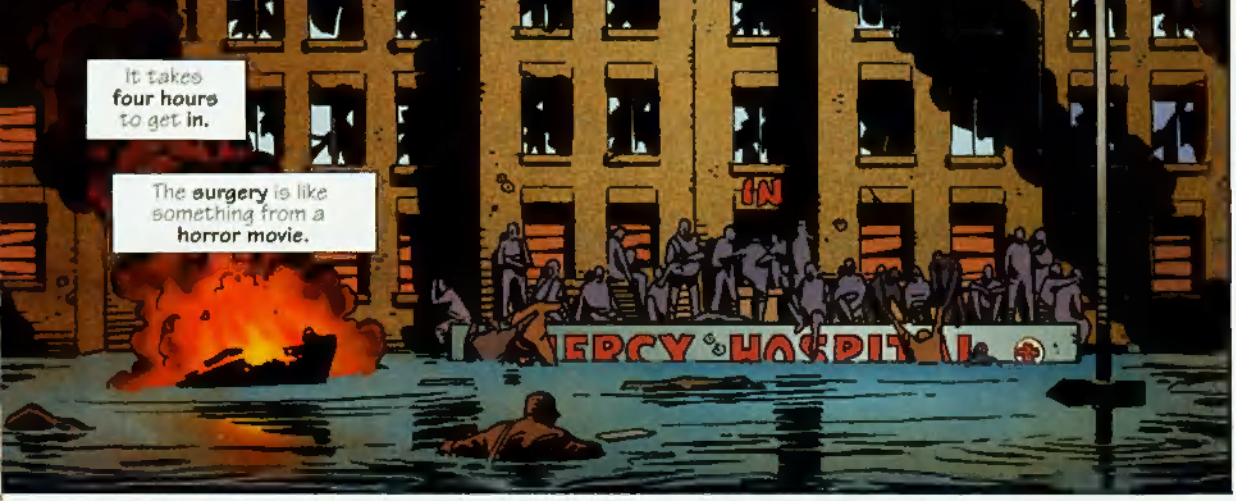

MY NAME'S MARTHA I'M A SOLDIER, JUST LIKE YOU.
JUST STAY STILL TILL I'VE GOT YOUR STOMACH BANDAGED.

Just when you start to think about something else, another one **hits.**

His name's **Nixon.** He says he was a **tax collector** before the **war** but he seems nice.
There're **questions** he should be **asking** me -- like how I **got** there -- but either he's too rattled or he doesn't **care.**
On the **TV** they're always saying we're avoiding **civilian targets.**
There're **twenty million New Yorkers.** Good luck finding **targets** that aren't **civilian.**
BUS LANE

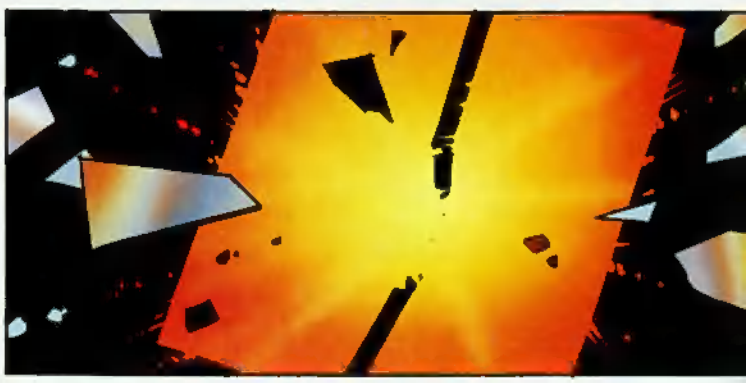
It's really weird. You can't even hear the planes, let alone see them.

This is worse than **Texas.**


It takes four hours to get in.
The surgery is like something from a horror movie.
IN

IT'S ALL BELUGA'S FAULT, THE BASTARD. HE DRAGGED US INTO THIS STUPID WAR-- IGNORED ALL THE WARNINGS.
I'M SURPRISED NOBODY'S KILLED HIM.

CHRIST, WASHINGTON --WHERE'VE YOU BEEN?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



He finds his cigarette and puffs on it as he studies me.
My ears are ringing so bad I can hardly hear him.

YOU MUST'VE BEEN SOUTH OF FORTIETH STREET. WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET WORD OUT.
BELUGA DIED OVER A WEEK AGO. ONE OF HIS LIEUTENANTS GOT THE RIGHT IDEA.
ARE YOU SERIOUS? THEN ALL THIS... THERE'S NO REASON.

THE FIRST NIGHT THE BOMBERS TOOK OUT OUR COMMUNI-CATIONS. AS FAR AS GETTING WORD OUT ON FOOT--WELL, WHO'S CRAZY ENOUGH TO LEAVE THEIR POSITIONS?
JUST A MINUTE...

CENTRAL. THIS IS RUGRAT. CODE BAKER ALLEN PIXEL. TARGET ELIMINATED. DO YOU COPY?
WE COPY, SERGEANT. THAT WAS FAST WORK--

IT WASN'T ME--
--A LITTLE TOO FAST. WE UNDER-STAND YOU HAVE TO SAY WHAT THEY TELL YOU TO, SERGEANT--
-- YOU UNDER-STAND WE CAN'T LEAVE THIS CHANNEL OPEN. GOD-SPEED AND CENTRAL OUT.

ANSWER ME!
NO-- YOU IDIOT-- THERE'S NO REASON--

They say war is hell but that's not all there is to it.
War is really dumb.

THE END

SEPTEMBER 2, 2012. SOMEWHERE IN LOUISIANA. THE HEART OF THE FIRST SEX CONFEDERACY.
MY NAME IS MARTHA WASHINGTON. I'M A SOLDIER. THIS IS THE SECOND AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.
ONE MORE TO GO, COMPUTER. CHECK SYSTEMS. ALL POWER TO WEAPONS. WE'RE STANDING OUR GROUND.
Yes, Martha. Power transfer complete. No errors found reading systems. Efficiency 100%.
Mumblety-peg.
MUMBLETY-PEG?! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, COMPUTER?
It's a game, played by children, with knives. But I don't have any idea how I know that – or why I brought it up, Martha.
I just hope all this electricity isn't starting to confuse me.
COMPUTER! TARGET DISRUPTER AND FIRE!
Target locked and fixed, Elaine. Awaiting order to fire. Alert. Power build-up hazardous. Awaiting order to fire. You have three seconds.
THE RUMOR IS THAT THERE'S SOMEBODY SELLING THE SAME WEAPONS SYSTEMS TO EVERY SIDE OF THIS STUPID WAR
I GUESS WE'RE BOTH COMBAT TESTING THE SAME SYSTEM.
STATE OF THE ART

NEVER MIND ANY KIDS' GAMES, COMPUTER. TARGET THAT SUCKER'S DISRUPTER AND FIRE!
Yes, Martha auto-destruct sequence engaged.
CHAK! CHAK!
I GAVE THE ORDER, COMPUTER! FIRE! NOW!
Awaiting order to fire. Power build-up hazardous. Alert. You have one second.
Alert. Power build-up fatal.
SKREEK!
MMMMPOOM!
YAAAA!
AUTO-DESTRUCT?! NO, YOU HUNK OF JUNK!
Auto-destruct imminent. All systems secure.
BOOM!

IN THE LABS, THEY CHECK OUT EVERY MICRO-CHIP IN THESE THINGS--
-- BUT YOU DON'T HAVE THUNDERSTORMS IN LABS...

SPKAAM!
DAMN!
CHIK CHIK CHIK
DAMN!

CHUNNK
CHUNNK
HA-- HA--HA-- HA!
HA-- HA--HA-- HA!
HA-- HA--HA-- HA!
WE DECIDE TO WAIT AND SEE WHO SHOWS UP. WHICH OF US ENDS UP A PRISONER. AND WHICH GETS TO GO BACK TO THEIR UNIT?
WE SHARE RATIONS WE SWAP STORIES
WE DON'T TALK POLITICS.
THE END

INSUBORDINATION

THE SHAPE COMMUNICATIONS ARE IN THESE DAYS, NOBODY'S SURE WHAT'S GOING ON.
RUMORS ABOUT NEW YORK DICTATOR BELUGA KEEP FLYING. FIRST HE'S DEAD, THEN HE'S ALIVE, THEN HE'S DEAD AGAIN.
THE LATEST RUMOR IS THAT HE REALLY DID DIE LAST YEAR, BUT HIS WIFE ARIANNA TOOK OVER BEFORE NEW YORK COULD SURRENDER.
THEN HER SON ASSASSINATED HER AND TOOK OVER HIMSELF.
SO THEY KEPT IT IN THE FAMILY. THERE'S STILL A DICTATOR BELUGA AND THEY MADE A DEAL WITH THE SKINHEADS TO TAKE PHILADELPHIA AND SPLIT WHATEVER'S LEFT OF IT
FROM THE LOOKS OF THINGS, THERE WON'T BE MUCH TO SPLIT.
POOM
EEEE
THE SKINHEADS JUST LOVE THOSE LITTLE EARTH SCORCHER MISSILES.
DAMN THINGS. EVEN IF YOU DODGE THE FIRE, THE SCREECH THEY MAKE ON THE WAY DOWN IS LIKE A DENTIST DRILL TO YOUR HEAD
IF I GET BACK FROM THIS MISSION I'LL PROBABLY NEED TO HAVE MY INNER EAR RECONSTRUCTED AGAIN.
IF THIS WAR KEEPS UP AND I KEEP MYSELF ALIVE, I'LL BE HALF-PLASTIC.

BUT I SHOULDN'T BELLYACHE. WAR IS JUST ABOUT ALL ANYBODY KNOWS RIGHT NOW AND I'VE BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH TO STAY ALIVE SO FAR.
BESIDES WHICH, THERE'S A CHANCE I MIGHT GET TO MEET THE GREATEST SOLDIER THERE EVER WAS TONIGHT.
FOOM
I JUST WISH WE WERE HERE TO BRING HIM BACK ALIVE. HE DESERVES THAT MUCH, AT LEAST. BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT THE ORDERS SAY.
YAAA
AW, HELL! THERE GOES MACCHIO! THEY GOT MACCHIO!
WHAT ARE WE HERE FOR? WHAT ARE OUR ORDERS? I'M GETTING NOTHING OUTTA MY COMM-LINK!
YOU SHOULD'VE REVIEWED YOUR ORDERS ON THE FLIGHT, CRANZ. WE'VE GOT TWO HUNDRED YARDS TO CROSS TO INDEPENDENCE HALL
MENDOZA! LOSE THAT CHUTE! THERE'S NO POINT IN DYING FOR IT!
YES, LIEUTENANT. SORRY, LIEUTENANT. I WAS JUST TRYING TO SAVE PAX SOME MONEY.
MENDOZA. HE'S A NATURALIZED MEXICAN WHO'S MORE AMERICAN THAN ANY OF US. ALWAYS WORRYING ABOUT SAVING PAX SOME MONEY.
KEEPING HIM ALIVE IS PART OF MY JOB. WITH MACCHIO GONE I'M THE RANKING OFFICER.

KEEPING HIM ALIVE. KEEPING THE SQUAD ALIVE -- AND KEEPING IT FROM COMING APART AT THE SEAMS.
THESE DAYS, IT DOESN'T TAKE MUCH MORE THAN A BAD CAN OF RATIONS TO CAUSE DESERTIONS. AND IF ANYBODY DESERTS WE'RE ALL AS GOOD AS DEAD.
...INDEPENDENCE HALL--OR THE PIECES OF IT-- TWO HUNDRED YARDS.
I'M STILL READING A PULSE FROM CAPTAIN KURTZ' BIOCOMM. IT'S NOT MUCH OF A PULSE, BUT HE'S STILL ALIVE.
THESE NAZIS ARE A LOT MORE SERIOUS THAN THE ARYAN THRUST EVER WAS.
JESUS. THERE'S NOTHING LEFT OF MACCHIO. GOD, JESUS. I'M GONNA BE SICK.
SWALLOW IT, WHIT-AKKER.
SAY THE WORD, LIEUTENANT ANYTHING MOVING BETWEEN HERE AND THERE--I'LL BLOW IT IN HALF
CAPTAIN KURTZ?! WHAT IS THIS, SOME KIND OF JOKE? THEY DUMPED US INTO THIS HELLHOLE FOR THAT OLD FOSSIL?
WHAT IS HE NOW, ABOUT A HUNDRED YEARS OLD?
CAPTAIN KURTZ. YOU MEAN HE'S REAL? I ALWAYS FIGURED SOMEBODY MADE HIM UP...
THAT'S THE SUPERSOLDIER YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, CRANZ! IF HE WAS TWO HUNDRED, HE COULD STILL RIP YOUR WHINY THROAT OUT! HE'S PINNED DOWN AND WOUNDED AT INDEPENDENCE HALL AND WE GOT ORDERS TO GET TO HIM!
WHAT THE HELL'S HE DOING AT INDEPENDENCE HALL? WE GAVE UP ON PHILADELPHIA TWO WEEKS AGO! HE GO CRAZY? ARE WE ALL SUPPOSED TO GET OURSELVES KILLED SAVING SOME SENILE OLD MAN?
WE'VE GOT OUR ORDERS, BOY. AND WE'RE OBEYING THEM. ANY MORE INSUBORDINATION OUT OF YOU AND I'LL BLOW YOUR STUPID BRAINS OUT.
THIS IS CRAZY! THIS IS BULLSHIT! I'M OUTTA HERE! I'M ON MY WAY! I'M GOOSE-STEPPING WITH THE SKINHEADS! ANYBODY WHO WANTS TO JOIN ME, LET'S GO!
MAYBE HE'S RIGHT...
BLAM
IT'S THE ONLY WAY. HE'D GET THEM ALL KILLED. I HATE THIS JOB. I HATE THIS WAR. I HATE MYSELF.

YAARG
GRAA
THEN THE AIR TURNS TO FIRE AND THE BREATH GOES OUT OF MY LUNGS IN A RUSH AND I WISH I WASN'T CARRYING ANOTHER MURDER WITH ME ON MY WAY TO HELL.
NO. NOT TO HELL. NOT YET.
I'M NOT DYING. NOT YET.
EVERYTHING SMELLS OF BURNT HAIR AND COOKED MEAT. I'M THE ONLY ONE LEFT ALIVE.
MENDOZA, WHITAKKER, JOHNSTON. THERE ISN'T ENOUGH LEFT OF THEM TO SAY SO.
PAX
AND THERE ISN'T TIME TO CRY OR GET SICK LIKE I WANT TO OR EVEN TO STOP TO PRAY FOR THEM. I HAVE TO GET MOVING. I'VE GOT TWO HUNDRED YARDS TO CROSS.

I PRAY FOR THEM INSIDE MY HEAD, FOR WHATEVER MY PRAYERS ARE WORTH.

I PRAY FOR CRANZ, TOO. IT'S HARD NOT TO CRY WHEN I DO THAT.

TWO HUNDRED YARDS.

I MOVE AS FAST AND AS LOW TO THE GROUND AS I CAN AND I GUESS THE SKINHEADS DON'T NOTICE ME BECAUSE THE SCORCHERS STOP FALLING. IT'S QUIET AS A CHURCH. I'D THINK THE MISSILES HAD MADE ME DEAF IF IT WASN'T FOR THE HOWL OF THE WIND AND THE MOANS OF THE ONES KURTZ LEFT ALIVE.

IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY HE LEFT ALIVE.

BUT HE ALWAYS LEAVES A LOT OF THE ENEMY ALIVE. GOOD AND CLOBBERED, BUT ALIVE. THAT'S THE WAY HE'S ALWAYS BEEN, NO MATTER WHAT THE ORDERS SAY. "THEY'RE JUST GUYS WORKING FOR THE WRONG BOSSES," HE SAYS, "THEY PROBABLY GOT FAMILIES."

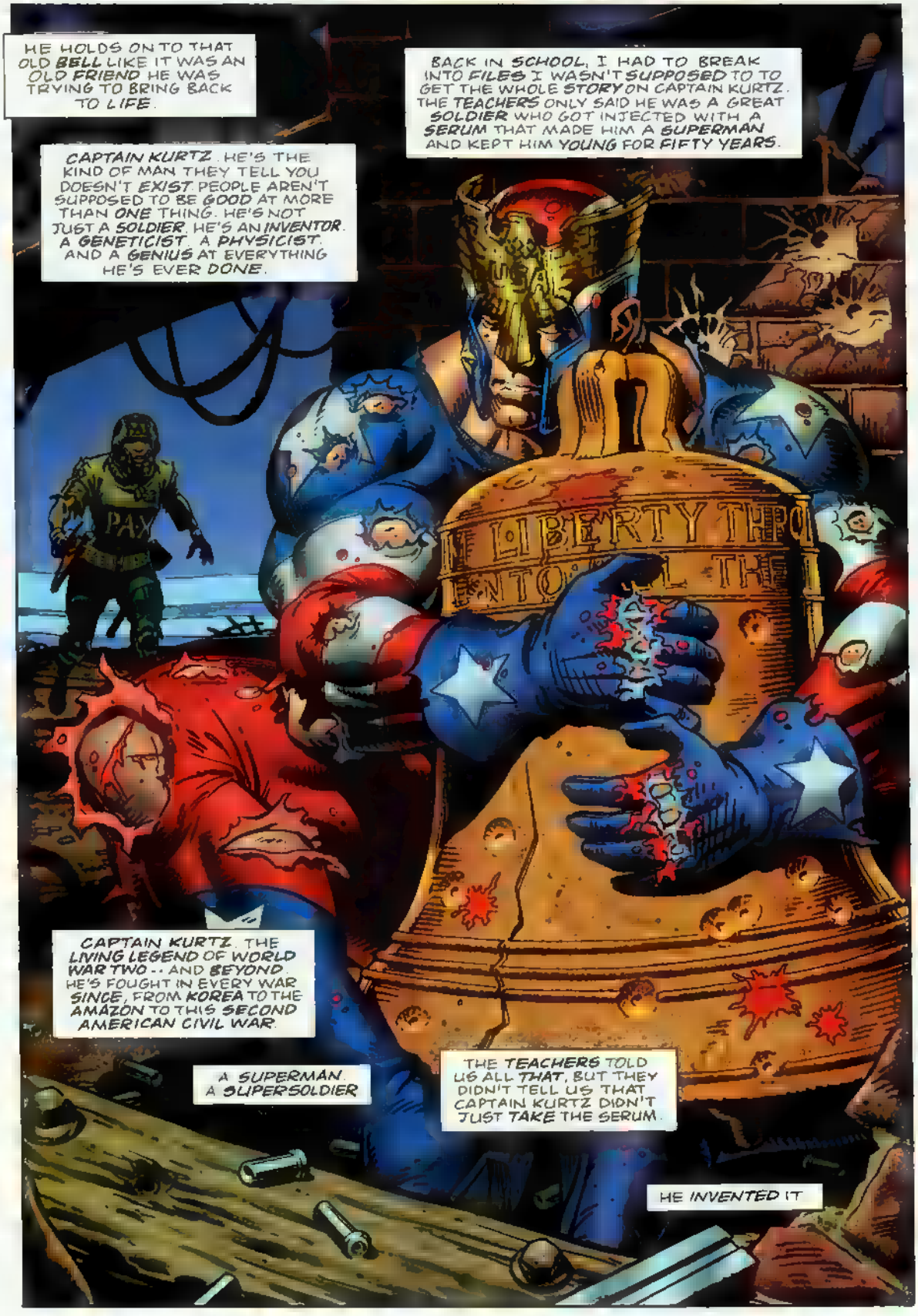
I WAS ALWAYS LOUSY AT SCHOOL BUT I COULDN'T EVER GET ENOUGH OF READING ABOUT CAPTAIN KURTZ.

TWO HUNDRED YARDS. THAT'S PROBABLY HOW LONG A RUN HE TOOK. NOBODY KNOWS WHY. WE *SURRENDERED* PHILADELPHIA. HE *DISOBEYED A DIRECT ORDER*, CHARGING INDEPENDENCE HALL LIKE HE DID. IT WAS *INSUBORDINATION*, PLAIN AND SIMPLE.

NOW HE'S *DYING* AND NOBODY KNOWS *WHY* HE DID ALL THIS.

P·A·X

MAYBE I'LL FIND OUT WHY BEFORE I DO THE DIRTY BUSINESS I'M SUPPOSED TO DO.


HE HOLDS ON TO THAT OLD BELL LIKE IT WAS AN OLD FRIEND HE WAS TRYING TO BRING BACK TO LIFE.
BACK IN SCHOOL, I HAD TO BREAK INTO FILES I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO TO GET THE WHOLE STORY ON CAPTAIN KURTZ. THE TEACHERS ONLY SAID HE WAS A GREAT SOLDIER WHO GOT INJECTED WITH A SERUM THAT MADE HIM A SUPERMAN AND KEPT HIM YOUNG FOR FIFTY YEARS.
CAPTAIN KURTZ. HE'S THE KIND OF MAN THEY TELL YOU DOESN'T EXIST. PEOPLE AREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE GOOD AT MORE THAN ONE THING. HE'S NOT JUST A SOLDIER. HE'S AN INVENTOR. A GENETICIST. A PHYSICIST. AND A GENIUS AT EVERYTHING HE'S EVER DONE.
PAX
CAPTAIN KURTZ. THE LIVING LEGEND OF WORLD WAR TWO -- AND BEYOND. HE'S FOUGHT IN EVERY WAR SINCE, FROM KOREA TO THE AMAZON TO THIS SECOND AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.
A SUPERMAN A SUPERSOLDIER
THE TEACHERS TOLD US ALL THAT, BUT THEY DIDN'T TELL US THAT CAPTAIN KURTZ DIDN'T JUST TAKE THE SERUM.
HE INVENTED IT.

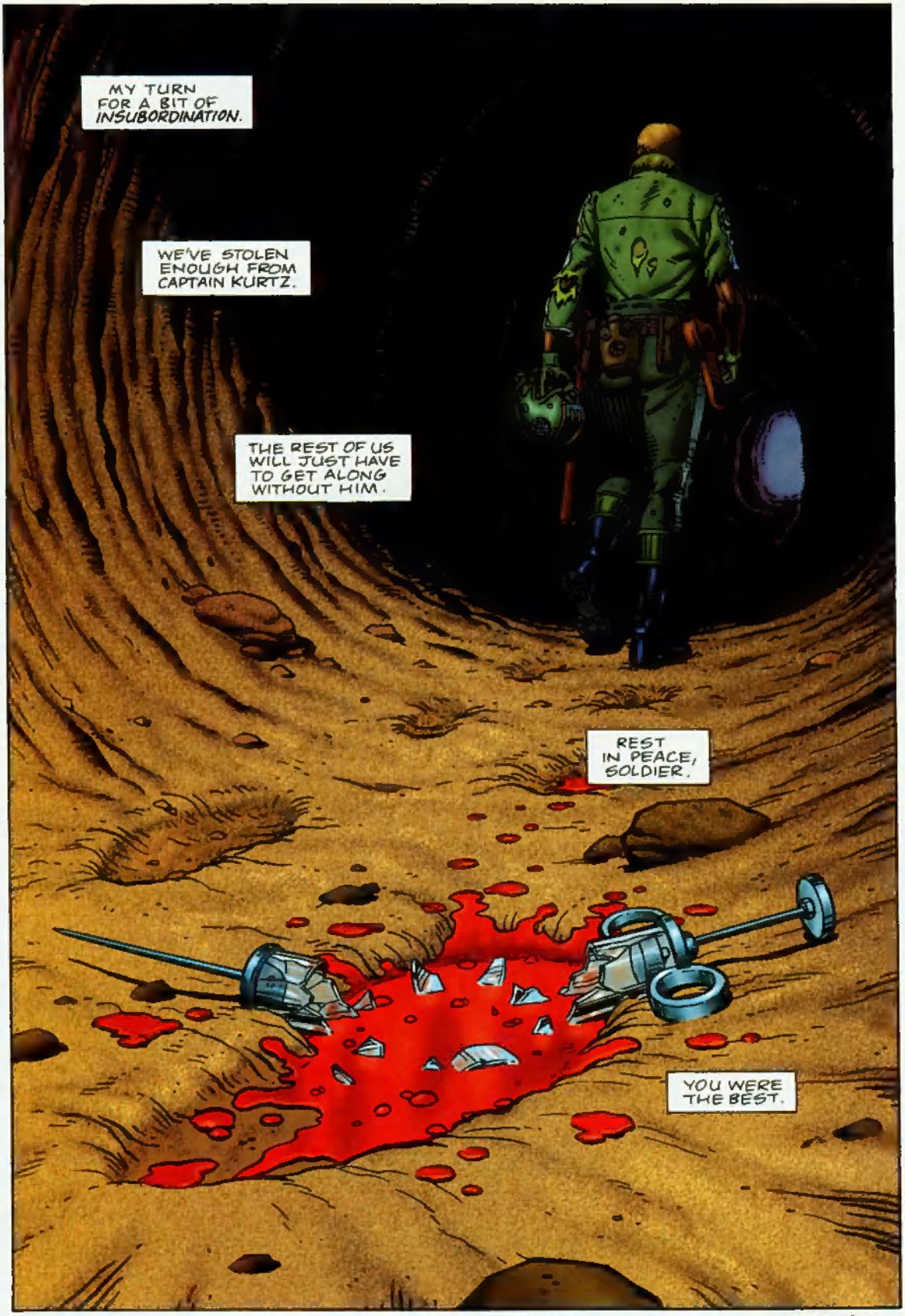
I WAIT TO SEE IF HE'LL NOTICE ME. I WONDER IF I'LL GET A CHANCE TO HEAR HIM TALK.
I LISTEN TO HIS BREATHING. IT'S SHALLOW, STEADY.
HE'S DYING, BUT YOU'D NEVER KNOW IT.
LIKE A KID WHO'S NEVER SEEN ANYTHING BAD IN HIS WHOLE LIFE, HE SMILES AT ME
AND HIS VOICE IS CALM AND SURE AND FRIENDLY AND THERE'S NO PAIN IN IT AT ALL.
USA
IT TOOK A LOT OF GUTS, YOU MAKING IT THIS FAR BEHIND THE LINES. WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LIEUTENANT?
WASHINGTON, SIR. MARTHA WASHINGTON. IT'S AN HONOR TO MEET YOU, SIR.
PLEASED TO MEET YOU, MARTHA.
PAX
COME HERE. COME CLOSER. THOSE NAZIS GOT SNIPERS CLOSING IN. I'LL COVER YOU. I'M PRETTY GOOD AT STOPPING BULLETS.

HIS ARM'S AN OAK TREE ACROSS ME, BUT HE DOESN'T LET ME FEEL THE WEIGHT.
IT BARELY SHUDDERS WHEN THE BULLETS HIT HIM.
SPAKK
STEEL-JACKETED. I WON'T BE ABLE TO TAKE TOO MANY OF THOSE BABIES. WE DON'T HAVE US A LOT OF TIME, MARTHA. YOU BETTER GET TO BUSINESS.
COME ON, LIEUTENANT. I KNOW YOU CAN'T BE HERE TO RESCUE ME.
NO, SIR. THE LAST OF THE SERUM YOU CREATED --IT WAS DESTROYED IN A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT IN OMAHA, WHERE IT WAS STORED. AND ALL THE FILES TELLING HOW TO MAKE IT WERE ERASED.
YEAH, THOSE DAMN NUKES. THEY ENDED THE BIG ONE, SURE, BUT THEY'RE A ROTTEN WEAPON. THEY MAKE A MESS--AND THEY MAKE IT ALL TOO EASY.
SORRY. I TALK TOO MUCH.
YOU CAN TALK AS MUCH AS YOU WANT TO, SIR. YOU'RE THE ONLY HERO I EVER HAD, EXCEPT FOR MY MOM. I NEVER IMAGINED I'D ACTUALLY GET TO MEET YOU.
YOUR MOM. SHE STILL ALIVE?
YES, SIR.
SPAKK
SPAKK
SPAKK
YOU OUGHT TO WRITE TO HER. IT'LL MEAN A LOT TO HER
SO COMMAND'S SHORT ON SERUM AND THE ONLY PLACE LEFT TO GET MORE IS FROM MY BLOOD. WELL, I STILL GOT A FAIR AMOUNT OF THAT.
SPAKK
GO AHEAD. DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT IT.
SPAKK
I FEEL LIKE SOME KIND OF VAMPIRE.

NOW DON'T YOU GO THINKING THAT WAY, MARTHA. YOU'RE A GREAT GAL. YOU GOT A LOT OF COURAGE. YOU GOT A GOOD HEAD ON YOUR SHOULDERS. AND YOU GOT A JOB TO DO.
YOU JUST STAY TRUE. THE TIME MAY COME WHEN YOU GOT TO STOP TAKING ORDERS -- AND YOU'LL KNOW IT WHEN IT DOES.
YOU DISOBEYED A DIRECT ORDER, CHARGING THIS PLACE.
YEAH, IT WAS ALL THOSE SWASTIKAS CONVERGING ON THE LIBERTY BELL. I COULDN'T STOMACH US GIVING UP THE LIBERTY BELL TO A PACK OF NAZIS.
THIS IS A PRETTY SCREWED-UP WAR.
I DON'T ASK HIM WHAT THIS LIBERTY BELL IS. I DON'T WANT HIM TO THINK I'M DUMB.
I GOT AN ORDER FOR YOU, LIEUTENANT. A DIRECT ORDER. YOU GOING TO OBEY IT?
SCREWED UP. YEAH, IT'S A BAD ONE, THIS WAR. THE BOSSES THESE DAYS, THEY'RE SENDING US IN ON SOME ROTTEN JOBS. BUT I DON'T HATE THEM. I DON'T HATE ANYBODY. I NEVER HATED ANYBODY IN MY LIFE, EXCEPT HITLER.
MY THROAT GOES DRY. ALL I CAN DO IS NOD.
GOOD SOLDIER. THE RATZIS, THEY'VE STOPPED SHOOTING. THEY'RE MOVING IN. YOU GOT MAYBE THIRTY SECONDS. THERE'S A TUNNEL I DUG JUST INSIDE THAT FENCE OVER THERE.
NO ARGUMENTS. YOU WON'T BE DOING ME ANY FAVORS GETTING KILLED.
AND STILL ALL I CAN DO IS NOD.
P.A.X

FOR A SECOND I CAN'T MOVE. HE SWATS ME ON THE BUTT AND SHOVES ME OFF.
RUN! KEEP YOUR HEAD DOWN!
AND WRITE YOUR MOM!
USA
COME ON, RATZIS! IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!

THEY'VE GOTTEN TO HIM BY THE TIME I REACH THE TUNNEL HE DUG. IT WAS PROBABLY JUST BIG ENOUGH FOR HIM TO SQUEEZE THROUGH, BUT MY HEAD DOESN'T EVEN TOUCH WHEN I STAND UP IN IT.
THE AIR TURNS TO FIRE AGAIN. I DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHY.
THE GROUND SHAKES. CAPTAIN KURTZ'S FINAL BATTLE SEEMS TO GO ON FOREVER.
AT THE LAST OF IT, I SWEAR I HEAR HIM LAUGH.
LIKE ROLLING THUNDER, HE LAUGHS.
AND EVEN AFTER HE'S GONE, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO SUCK THIS MUCH MORE OUT OF HIM.
THAT'S THE ORDERS.


MY TURN FOR A BIT OF INSUBORDINATION.
WE'VE STOLEN ENOUGH FROM CAPTAIN KURTZ.
THE REST OF US WILL JUST HAVE TO GET ALONG WITHOUT HIM.
REST IN PEACE, SOLDIER.
YOU WERE THE BEST.

FOR JACK

P.A.X
P.A.X
WASHINGTON
M. 1679811
HAPPY
ARTHA
Raggy